Child Murder and Abortion in Contemporary Anglo-Irish Drama

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Introduction

Of all the literary essays on feministic issues, only a few survive into succeeding generations as trustworthy guides through a vast ocean of sensitive issues, still less as trustworthy prophets who had foreseen what was to come. *A Literature of Their Own* by Elaine Showalter is one work of this kind to have survived. It prophesied the advent of a "female phase" in which gynotext, that is female writings as well as female experience, would be properly evaluated. Her trumpet call steered major feminist efforts to construct a canon of women's writing.

Irish intellectuals and academics may have been a feeling of déjà vu when women of literature, especially Eavon Boland, criticized the first three volumes of *The Filed Day Anthology* in the early 1990s for failing to devote enough space to women's writing. By so doing, those critics put an emphasis not only upon exposing the patriarchal mind-set in the academic world but also upon excavating gynotexts, which had been unfairly neglected. This emphasis shifted serious attention from androtexts, namely male writings, to gynotexts and bore a plentiful crop of fruit, such as the fourth and fifth volumes of *The Field Day Anthology*, which have been lately published.

But this shift of attention is potentially a double-edged sword through which the significant male response to feminism is severely reduced. Anglo-Irish literature has its long tradition of male writers, poets, and playwrights, who have tried to share and reflect the female experience. The paradigm shift from finding fault in male versions of an intellectual world to excavating a buried female world might leave the male feminist tradition unattended. This may explain why serious attempts to trace this tradition did not follow the precedent established in the mid 1980s, such as *Men and Feminism in Modern Literature* by Declan Kiberd. He deplored how unusual it was to come upon a book written by a man on the theme of the male response to feminist issues. It was a situation before *Men and Feminism*, and it is still so after that book.

Hence emerges the main aim of this paper, which observes the various ways that Anglo-Irish male poets, playwrights, and novelists have expressed their desire to share a female experience and which assiduously accumulates male responses to such experience until a trustworthy map of the rather hidden achievements of the men of literature can be made. For this purpose, I choose infanticide as a topic because the issue of infanticide is a place where the mechanisms of patriarchy and the crisis of women intersect, a place where female sufferings and male sympathies or male vicarious sufferings cross. As Margot Backus has recently explored in *The Gothic Family Romance*, child murder has long figured in Anglo-Irish literature. And significantly child murder has been a current issue in Ireland as, for example, in the infamous Kerry Babies Case of 1984, a child murder case in Ringsend in 2002, when a horrified swimmer discovered the body of a baby girl packed into a sports bag in a cove[1], or another case in Coolock in 2003, when the body of a new-born baby boy, wrapped in a blanket, was found in a dump[2]. The problem is that, devoting our energies to revealing child murder as products on an androcratic mind-set, such as a "self-devouring" patriarchal society of the Big House, we remain entrenched within the paradigm constructed by feminist critics since the 1970s. In that paradigm, the important link between women in crisis and the male efforts to share female experience is still missing.

In Anglo-Irish literature written during the 20th century, we often find male writers, poets and playwrights describing a complex relationship between maternity and infanticide. In *Purgatory* (1938), for example, W.B. Yeats described how a mother died giving birth to her son and how the son, "Old Man", killed his son. Seamus Heaney dealt with a child murder in 'Limbo' (1972) and described how "tenderly" a mother killed her child. In *Bailegangaire* (1985), Tom Murphy describes Dolly, a housewife who inwardly expects her elder sister to give her

an abortion after Dolly conceives a child whose father she doesn't know. In Margo Harkin's *Hush-a-Bye Baby* (1989), the director underscores how a girl suffers from an unexpected pregnancy and attempts to have an abortion in vain through her makeshift self-treatment.

These are not isolated descriptions of the issues of maternity and infanticide. These issues emerge repeatedly through succeeding generations, and they are always current issues in Ireland. Maternity is a collaboration between men and women, so is infanticide. Men as well as women have been involved socially, religiously, and culturally in the continuous relationship among marriage, maternity and infanticide. Then how have male poets, playwrights and novelists tried to understand those women in crisis and tried to share the female experience? That is the question which underlies this paper.

Tom Murphy's *Bailegangaire*

In Tom Murphy's *Bailegangaire,* which was first performed by the Druid Theatre in 1985, Dolly suffers from her unexpected pregnancy after adulterous affairs. When her elder sister Mary asks, "Who's the father?"(B, p.54)[3], Dolly openly replies "I have my suspicions" (B, p.54). Not because she would not like to name and shame the father, just as Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet letter* wouldn't, but because she has love affairs with several men at the same time, Dolly cannot specify the father by name. When Dolly says to Mary, "You're a nurse, you could help me if you wanted to"(B, p.54), keeping in mind the fact that Mary qualifies herself as a State Registered Nurse and as an Assistant Matron, Dolly's implication is that she, with the skilled help of her sister, gives birth to the baby privately and commits infanticide in secret, or much simpler, an risky abortion in secret. Tom Murphy's desire to share the female experience with a woman in crisis was so ardent that he put Dolly in her later period of pregnancy. Now that she is already about half a year gone in pregnancy, Dolly's plight is heightened.[4]

Simply because Dolly's pregnancy is an open secret in the community, her moral transgression is cruelly punished. Dolly's "the-family rosary"(B, p.18) mother-in-law informs Stephen, her son, how Dolly commits the sin of lust, one of the seven deadly sins. Then Stephen hits Dolly in the mouth with his fist, and "struck an' struck an' kicked an' kicked an' pulled"(B, p.57) Dolly about the house by the hair. Each time Stephen strikes and kicks Dolly, her mother-in-law gives an approving nod. The neighbours as well as Dolly's mother-in-law assume a cold-hearted attitude toward Dolly. When Dolly passes by one of her neighbours, "lean and lanky"(B, p.18) May Glynn, and sees her in her garden, May goes in without greetings as if Dolly had "distemper too or whatever"(B, p.18). What deserves more than a passing notice is the adjectives put on May Glynn, "lean and lanky". We will see the same phrase again when "that other lean and lanky bastard"(B, p.18) Conor, Dolly's next door neighbour, tries to drive her out of the community continuously by snaking "his fence in another six inches"(B, p.18). The particular emphasis on morbidly skinny figures is probably an echo from the Great Famine(1945-48), which is a persistent obsession with the playwright as it had taken its own shape in *Famine* in 1968. Dolly belongs to the New Ireland of 1984 in which a high-technology industry is exerting an economic influence even upon rural areas while the social and religious mores, which put brutal pressure on Dolly, has been conditioned by the Old Ireland for which the Great Hunger is a metaphor.

A few remarks should be added concerning the discrepancy between the Old Ireland and the New Ireland. It is obvious that the leptosomic figures do not receive benefit from economic development which is referred to in the play. As the play shows, the influence of new technology industry and overseas capital spreads even to the small village in the west Ireland, some miles from Galway. One of Tom Murphy's favorite themes is unnaturally rapid changes in social structure, which can give rise to a terrible dichotomy between the rich and the poor and produces a strong tension between them. In On the Outside, Thomas Murphy describes in the form of a public dancehall how the social rituals of a community come under the influence of a booming economy. Frank and Joe in *On the Outside* can not enter the dancehall because the entrance fee was drastically raised. They see the local youth who receive benefit from an inflow of foreign capital and economic development go into the dancehall. Tom Murphy foregrounds the tension between old Ireland which belongs to an earlier time, and contemporary Ireland

that continues to undergo drastic change based upon an inflow of overseas capital. By doing so, Tom Murphy turned the question whether to stay at home or to leave the country into the question whether to stay in old Ireland or to keep pace with a foreign power within it.

This painful question which JJ in *A Crucial Week of a Grocer's Assistant* submits is completely internalized. *Bailegangaire* is set against the background of these issues. The "lean and lanky" figures are, judging by their apparent poverty and Conor's insatiable desire for possessions of land, a metaphor for the Great Famine. They belong to the Old Ireland before drastic economical changes, and it is the social and religious mores of the Old Ireland that marginalize Dolly and her sexuality to the fringe (or drive them out) of the community. Thus the play underlines cultural dualism, revealing how the local community, whose social and religious conditioning goes back to the 19th century, entertains mortal antipathy to Dolly, whose sexuality and home environment are based on the New Ireland and breaks a fundamental social code. By covering a few centuries of social and religious conditioning, Tom Murphy rejects Dolly's sufferings as only personal.

Dolly's suffering from an unexpected pregnancy and domestic violence in her repressive home plays an important role in *Bailegangaire*, together with the psychological affliction of Mommo, who tells again and again in the third person but refuses to conclude a story about a laughing competition that prevents an old couple (Mommo herself and her husband) from coming home. The play also reveals the distress of Mary, who becomes a successful nursing matron in London but a failed lover and returns to Ireland in order to find home. In the narrative structure of this multilayered story of homecoming, Mommo and Mary are revolving around the idea of an ideal home and their search for it. Dolly's plight in her devastated home composes the final part of their home-coming trilogy within the play, and her unwilling pregnancy adds a further dimension to the play: their next generation. Mary, at the end of the play, accepts Dolly's coming baby and says, "a brand new baby to gladden their home" (B, p.75). Mary's use of the third person "their" refers, as a musical harmony with Mommo's storytelling, to Mary herself and Mommo. A cordial welcome is to await the coming baby, whose father nobody knows. But it is only after these three women in physical or psychological plights achieve perfect harmony among themselves by unremitting toils and by taking infinite pains that Dolly's baby is rescued from infanticide. Thus their next generation is assured.

Bailegangaire is, in one sense, a daring full-dramatization of the near impossibility of this kind. Perfect harmony is the last thing that the audience expects, especially from Dolly when she refers to a churchyard, where three members of her immediate family are buried. She says, "We filled half that graveyard. Well, I'll fill the other half" (B, p.60). Behind her ambiguous way of speaking, the dark implication is that she will drive another three members of her family to the grave, that is, her coming baby, her sharp-sighted mother-in-law, and her despotic husband. Her conjugal life is so profoundly dysfunctional and her husband is so tyrannical that she is obsessed not only with infanticide but also with parricide. Her struggle to throw off the domestic despotism and achieve her freedom from the constant surveillance of her mother-in-law sounds poignant and outstanding in the play, whose main theme is not subversion of home but a voyage towards home.

In a public interview at the Abbey Theatre, Tom Murphy remarked about *Bailegangaire* that nobody in the play shows a spark of interest in Mommo's house and "Big Brother does not exist"[5]. Nicholas Grene, based upon his personal conversation with the playwright, took it on faith.[6] Probably the stage direction of the play effectively endorses Murphy's remarks and Greene's belief concerning the absence of Big Brother: "A car passes by outside. / The silence is now being punctuated by another car passing by outside (B, p.30). / Another car passes by (B, p.31)". Mary playfully reacts to one of those passing cars, saying "come in!"(B, p.31) Those cars deepen the lonesome atmosphere of her lonely abode, where Tommy O'Brien's radio programme of light classics serves as the only contact with the outside world. Nobody stops at her house except her desperate little sister, Dolly.

The passing cars were referred to as "traffic" to "the weekend-long meeting at the computer plant place"(B, p.50). This foreign-owned enterprise displays the Celtic Tiger in its cradle - economic growth accompanied with vicissitudes - and a brief profile of the New Ireland, which was to be dealt with fully in Gerard Stembridge's *That Was Then* (2002) with past and present in a high tension. The Big Brother of the New Ireland is indifferent to

Mommo's old-fashioned thatched house, as Tom Murphy assured us in the interview, in its economic terms. In this context, the setting of *Bailegangaire* in 1984 might level a cynical criticism against George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and we may consider Orwellian prophecy is, as Nicholas Grene said, "exactly wrong".[7]

It does not, however, necessarily mean that women in *Bailegangaire* are free from male dictatorial power and its close surveillance. Rather the narrative structure of *Bailegangaire* gradually reveals the malfunction of Dolly's home, where she suffers from male domination. Even when her husband, Stephen turns down work in the foreign-owned company in the local community and prefers a liberating work prospect and exile to England, Dolly, looking at the door in Act Two, talks to herself: "I hate going home" (B, p.65). She says this although she is comfortably situated with the money her husband sends from London. Her house is well-equipped owing to economic prosperity in England. But she is unable to overcome her antipathy towards her home simply because her home is substantially a dystopia. Even when Stephen works away from home, he rules the home and keeps an eye upon Dolly as an invisible dictator in league with his mother, "Old Sharp Eyes", as his astute agent. Stephen places Dolly under his control as if he were the Big Brother.

When Dolly indicates the outdoors where she had an adulterous affair and says to Mary "Jesus, men! You think I enjoy! I use them!" (B, p.57), she gives us an insight to her intention. Dolly's seemingly nymphomaniac tendencies are a manifestation of her desperate resistance to a dystopia which a man has made. Her sexual exploitation of men can be regarded as an variation of the subversion of the highly repressive home ruled by a Big Brother and revenge on the hypocritical local community, where patriarchal religious mores punish and marginalize her while preserving a double standard concerning sexual behaviour. As irony would have it, Dolly saves the money Stephen sends in order to get a powerful figure in the underworld to kill Stephen or, at least, torment him. This is her furious counterattack upon a repressive dictatorship.

Dolly's resistance offers the most convincing reason why the play is set in the year 1984. Although the absence of economic Big Brothers of the New Ireland is underlined by the playwright, we can not overlook the existence of social and religious Big Brothers like May Glynn and "Old Sharp Eyes"(B, p.57) and the existence of a patriarchal and tyrannical Big Brother like Stephen. In one sense, *Bailegangaire* is an effective antithesis to the dystopian prophecy by George Orwell. As the laborious storytelling heals the sorrows and remorse of the three women, they rise above the repressive powers exerted by those Big Brothers.

Throughout the 20th century, many writers and filmmakers were disappointed at the idea of creating their utopias, gave up the idea of utopia and produced a huge variety of dystopian and apocalyptic visions in their works. Examples abound: Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano* (1952), Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985). But Tom Murphy does not abandon the idea of achieving harmony even in the explosive situation of *Bailegangaire*, whose favourable view of human potentiality is outstanding among these dark chains of dystopian and apocalyptic visions in the 20th century.

For all the utopian connotation of *Bailegangaire*, it is not so much in the context of English literature as a parody of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) as in the context of social, religious and political complications before and after the national referendum in 1983 that the play reveals its significance to Ireland. It contradicts the conservative climate generated by certain religious events. The formal visit of Pope John Paul II to Ireland (September 29 to October 1 in 1979) and the largest Irish Mass, which gathered over 1.3 million people in the Phoenix Park, gave majestic dignity to the established Catholic doctrine in Ireland. The Pope's strenuous advocacy of traditional Catholic values and his severe censure against divorce, contraception and abortion backed up the trend of the times, which was to produce various organizational efforts, such as the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign in 1981.[8] Clerical pressures on politicians to support the amendment mounted rapidly. On the 7th of September in 1983, the constitutional amendment was passed by a great majority, and the right to life of unborn children was guaranteed. Thus the existing anti-abortion legislation was endorsed. The year of 1984 can be regarded, in this context, as the year when the women who had an unexpected pregnancy at that time had to face a harsh reality in the acrimonious aftermath of the referendum. The death of fifteen year old Ann Lovett, whose

unexpected pregnancy Paula Meehan described in 'The Statue of the Virgin at Granard Speaks' ("she pushed her secret out into the night"[9]), is a horrifying event in itself and a black omen of disasters. About two month later, the tragedy of Ann Lovett was followed by the Kerry Babies Case, in which the body of a newborn was found on the White Strand beach in Co. Kerry.[10] It is in this context that the setting of *Bailegangaire* in 1984 and the unexpected pregnancy of Dolly should be evaluated.

Through his career, Tom Murphy has constantly underscored the enormous impact of religious mores on an individual. Although the narrative structure of *Bailegangaire* reveals acutely how Dolly's sufferings and her sexuality are marginalized and punished by the religious code, this is not the first occasion the playwright accuses social and religious mores of being incompetent in the face of a personal inner crisis. In his plays, social and religious mores often underscore the absence of church. In Scene Two, which is cynically subtitled, 'The Moral Force', in *Famine* (1968), Tom Murphy reveals that Father Horan is so impotent at a momentous social crisis that he cannot raise any hope in the minds of the impetuously rebellious crowds. In *Bailegangaire*, Tom Murphy directs our attention to the impotence of church as a spiritual famine. Mommo accuses the clergy, "there's nothin' like money to make the clergy fervent"(B, p.35).

In the wake of the economic boom described in *Bailegangaire*, the clergy was blamed for their mercenary motive. As Fintan O'Toole put it acutely about Seamus in *Brigit*, which Tom Murphy wrote for a television programme, the playwright describes "a world where religion is contaminated with commerce".[11] The relentless exertion of religious and social code in *Bailegangaire* underlines the incompetence of church in the face of a crisis of a female inner life, which, as we shall see later, forms an interesting parallel with the parish priest in *Hush-a-Bye Baby*. The sanction of marriage by church penetrates the local community even when the incompetence of church is palpable. Three women in crisis in *Bailegangaire* have to create an effective substitute for church for and by themselves, namely a house of intimate confession and healing just as Harry and Francisco in *The Sanctuary Lamp* have to find their salvation through their own fierce but fruitful interaction.

Bailegangaire, as we have seen, demands to be put in the context of social, religious and political complications before and after the national referendum in 1983 and, at the same time, to be put in the intertextual arena of Tom Murphy's plays, in which the impotence of church and the devastating effects of social and religious mores upon personal inner crisis have been examined. In these particular contexts the very last sentence of *Bailegangaire* spoken by Mary ("a brand new baby to gladden their home") can be evaluated. These concluding words assure the audience that Dolly's baby, who is coming from outside of the traditional sanction of marriage, is to be welcomed and to become a source of the constant pleasure for the three women. Here we find the male playwright attempts to give considerable autonomy to the suffering women and to challenge the existing mores in Ireland. Mary's tranquil manifestation of harmony reflects the playwright's scorching anger towards what can drive women to crisis, women who suffer from unexpected pregnancy but have no option in their maternity, to an early death in despair or drive them into infanticide.

The process of achieving harmony is underscored as the recovery from dysfunctional storytelling in Mommo's "unfinished symphony". The endlessness of Mommo's storytelling is surely tragic because of the lack of positive interaction between Mommo's storytelling and her granddaughters over a period of about thirty years. In the stage directions, Tom Murphy underscores the dysfunction and insensibility of Mary. In the beginning of the play, "Mary rises mechanically to make tea, lay the table"(B1, p.92). When Mary sits at the table later in Act One, she "lights a cigarette, face impassive, exhaling smoke"(B, p.6). While Mommo tells how the stranger and his wife in her story had trouble climbing a hill, Mary "puts on her apron mechanically, and then sets to work"(B, p.9). When Mommo asks for a mug of tea, Mary "automatically sets about making fresh tea"(B, p.24). Murphy stresses Mary's robotic reaction and her lack of the depth of feeling towards Mommo, who is a disappointed returnee from England and a victim of unhappy cohabitation.

It is when Mary comes to share the storytelling with Mommo that Mary gets over her emotional dysfunction. After Mary sums up her painful past as an exile later in Act One, she, in place of Mommo, begins to tell the story "idly at first"(B, p.30). Then she gradually gains a genuine depth of feeling until she makes up her mind to bring

Mommo's story to an end, rejecting ominous phrases in a poem of Thomas Hardy such as, "It seems no power can waken it[the silence]"(B, p.31). Mary "progressively...begins to dramatise the story"(B, p.35), and she finally manages to make Mommo say the last words of the story in the end of the play. Although Mary often tries to awaken Mommo through this play, it is hearty laughter welled up between Mary and Dolly that wakes Mommo up from her fitful sleep. Murphy underscores that the reconciliation between seemingly conflicting two daughter acts as a trigger for the finishing touches of Mommo's storytelling. While Mouth and Auditor in Beckett's *Not I* lack of cooperative interaction, the storytelling in *Bailegangaire* is a joint work by three women, which finally works as a release therapy for them.

Murphy seems to assert both the healing effects of storytelling upon personal inner plight and the power of a drama against repressive and patriarchal code. In *Bailegangaire*, Tom Murphy illustrates how storytelling can create harmony among women in a repressive community where there is no easily achieved harmony. At the end of the play, Mary asserts that the coming baby, who is from out of traditional sanction of marriage in the community, is "a brand new baby to gladden their home" (B, p.75). This concluding sentence by Mary shows, unlike Mouth in *Not I*, her confident manipulation of storytelling in the third person. She knows that Mommo's dim consciousness is turned into harmonious mental balance and that their seemingly endless agony and disharmony is ended. Dolly was given consolation like a promised blessing, "You're going to be alright, Dolly"(B, p.73), and Mary's search for home, "Home. Where is it, Mommo?"(B, p.30), and human companionship, "I need to talk to - someone!" (B, p.23) finally produces a peaceful place of their dwelling to which fair conditions, "haven't we everything we need here, the two of us" (B, p.75) and human feelings and compassion, "a tear isn't such a bad thing, Mary"(B, p.75) properly attached. Thus harmony comes and Mary can vicariously conclude Mommo's monologue with her self-confident manipulation of storytelling in the third person. The collaboration among three women of the painstaking storytelling turns a kitchen-cum-Mommo's bedroom in the thatched house into a huge confession box, through which the absence of church is compensated. As a result of it, the peace of their minds is achieved.

At the end of play, when deep sleep, the most natural function of human bodies, comes to these three women, we are encouraged to notice the real implication of the use of storytelling in the play. The function of the storytelling in the third person, which Anthony Roche regarded as "resistance to treating the women's experience as merely personal"[12], has broader significance in the end of the play. That should be read not only as a proof of its healing effects upon the three women in crisis but also as a metaphor for the function of a drama in a community, that is, the male playwright's manifestation of the powers of plays in the Irish society. A great number of the unexpectedly pregnant women who must have suffered from acrimonious arguments against abortion in 1983 faced, after their uneasy gestation period, their doomsday in 1984.

It was in the most difficult year of 1984 that Tom Murphy celebrated in *Bailegangaire* the "brand new baby" who is from outside of the traditional marital sanction, and he challenged the social and religious mores that can not share the female experience in crisis. Through his storytelling of the play, Murphy showed deep sympathy with Irish women, who were far marginalized by the referendum in the previous year, and shared the female experience. Thus the male playwright, as he reveals in an interview, gets into Mommo's bed, in a sense, with "four women".[13] Hence in the end of the play, Mary's acquisition of self-confidence, the perfect harmony of Mommo's family and the manifestation by the male playwright of the female autonomy in the Irish society come together and they are united.

Margo Harkin's *Hush-a-Bye Baby* and Seamus Heaney's *'Limbo'*

Margo Harkin's feminist film, *Hush-a-Bye Baby,* was released in 1989, but the setting of the film is in Co. Derry in 1983. The national referendum in 1983 explicitly casts a dark shadow on the film as well as on Tom Murphy's *Bailegangaire.* In the referendum, as we have seen before, the Irish people made abortion illegal within the confines of Ireland, thus confirming Roman Catholic dogma under which no small number of women suffered

from unexpected pregnancy without any option in their maternity. The film also has echoes in shocking infanticides and tragic deaths of premature mothers in the following year, for example, as I have mentioned before, Anne Lovett, who died giving birth under a statue of the Blessed Mary and the Kerry Babies Case, whose investigations were a matter of public interest in the year of 1984. The image of Co. Derry described in *Hush-a-Bye Baby* is suffocative and claustrophobic. It presents a community embroiled in everlasting political conflict, severe "Supergrass Trials", religious restrictions, and resonant arguments about the referendum coming from the Republic of Ireland. Within this ethos, the 15-year old protagonist, Goretti experiences an unexpected pregnancy outside of the sanction of marriage and is driven to despair as indissoluble pregnancy dooms the mother in *Purgatory* to an endless twinge of remorse.

In the midst of her psychic struggle with an unexpected pregnancy, Goretti feels uneasy at the sight of young mothers on the street. The director inserted scenes of young mothers or baby-sitters wheeling perambulators so often that the city seems to be saturated with motherhood. This repeated portrayal continuously underscores the significance of female reproductive function within the socio-religious and socio-political order in Derry, just as the narrative structure of *Purgatory* reveals how a special emphasis is placed upon motherhood within an Ascendancy family for the continuation of lineage. What is engraved in female minds in child-oriented societies is nothing other than the infallibility of legitimate pregnancy, in which gratitude for her pregnancy is taken so much for granted.

In the scene of a religious class, which the girls attend as a compulsory subject, a parish priest elaborates on the sanctity of marriage. The giggling girls gaze absorbedly at the crotch of the priest who sits with his legs wide apart under the desk. The priest mistakes the girls' erotic countenances for accusation against his discourtesy and he, after the class, looks at his crotch searching for the imagined rip in his trousers. While the priest tries to limit female sexuality within an accepted religious code, the sexual passion of those girls is seeking alternative ways to express itself. The priest is so convinced of the reigning religious mores that he can not recognize them as they are, as Boy in *Purgatory* can not see his grandmother. To those who cannot share the female experience, those girls are invisible.

In a modern dance scene in gymnasium in which three girls, including Goretti, perform the exercise, the director Margo Harkin uses rock music by an American rock singer, Cyndi Lauper, "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun". We can hear the echo of the *carpe diem* theme where three girls seemingly seize their day in a physical expression of their passion in modern dance without any restriction. The music is an audible symbol of how the sexuality of young girls finds its expression, and the use of this particular music conveys the female director's ironic illustration of how cynical the theme of *carpe diem* sounds in a community in which the expression of free wills is highly restricted. The modern dance scene, with its lively, bouncing music, also contrasts strongly with a short-trip scene later in the film in which we see a message on a sign billboard "You are now entering Free Derry". What is interesting here is that Margo Harkin frames Goretti against the graffiti not when she enters Co. Derry but when she leaves Derry with her confidante, Dinky, taking a short trip to Co. Donegal for her holiday. Goretti seems to want freedom from the oppressive world. This illustrates how the socio-religious and socio-political community in Co. Derry restricts the female freedom so that Goretti as well as other girls in the community actually can't exercise their free will.

Ironically enough, Goretti can't seize her day even in Co. Donegal. While she is staying in an Irish-speaking area in Donegal, taking refuge from Derry and trying to find her identity, a radio programme about abortion issues arrests her attention. Most heartbreaking for her is the emphatic opinion of a woman who asserts that abortion is nothing but "murder". It is after she overhears the pungent discussion on the radio that the statue of the pregnant Virgin Mary starts to show herself in Goretti's nightmares and tortures her. An echo of the referendum in 1983 in the Republic of Ireland, with all its rhetoric of the right to life of unborn babies and the consequent personalization of embryos and foetuses, heightens Goretti's trauma and hysteria through visualization as the Holy Mother. There is no wonder that the radio programme from the Republic of Ireland afflicts Goretti. Whether she stays in the Republic of Ireland or lives in Northern Ireland, her position as an unexpectedly pregnant woman is almost the same on both sides of the border because the social and religious mores and the teaching of church are

exclusively pro-life, and the British Abortion Act of 1967 has never been applied in Northern Ireland.

Women's evaluation and conceptualization of an embryo or a foetus depend upon their social, cultural, and religious background, which vary from a piece of cellular tissue to a baby, perhaps named. What is important in Goretti's nightmare scenes is that she recognizes an embryo or a foetus in her body as a baby from the outset of her pregnancy. In her psychic state, the foetus takes on the same importance as a baby, whose image drives her to feel moral guilt. This is probably because Irish women, including Goretti, have heard repeatedly that abortion is the murder of an unborn child, which puts fierce pressure on Irish women who are considering abortion. In this Irish ethos, Goretti subconsciously emphasizes the humanity even of an embryo or a foetus, and so an image of abortion remains tremendously evil. As a result, abortion cannot be an option for women to take. If she wants to free from her suffering, she, as Old Man in *Purgatory* does on behalf of his mother, has to become a murderer, according to the pre-established code in her community.

Another feature of Goretti's recurring nightmare is the description of a statue of the Virgin Mary. Night after night the image of the Madonna being impregnated appears to Goretti in her dream and brings fierce accusatory pressure on her for her lack of gratitude for her pregnancy and her attempts at makeshift abortion. Helen Gallivan, in her *The Temple Within*, produced a revised image of the Virgin Mary, who must have found an immovable confidence in herself and "strength and joy in embracing her destiny".[14] What Helen Gallivan discovered is not an obedient or submissive woman but a self-motivated woman who had the courage to meet the holy request. In an interview, Helen Gallivan revealed how the society of Ireland has promulgated the image of the Virgin Mary as a docile woman and how women in Ireland are supposed to regard the image as an ideal image of women to imitate. This ideal image of the Virgin Mary is clear in *Hush-a-Bye Baby.* The shot in which one of Goretti's classmates played by Sinead O'Connor, wraps her head with a blue scarf and indulges herself in makeup as the Virgin Mary is a notable example of the conditioning.

When Sinead O'Connor appeared in 1992 on "Saturday Night Live", an American television programme, and tore a photo of Pope John Paul II, she seemed to intend to display a symbolical breaking point not of the frustration of the hard-line feministic singer-songwriter but of an Irish woman who would have no option or no better choice than remorse or agony if she should be put in a desperate maternal situation. (It was a new twist to the same exposition of the social conditioning for Neil Jordan to have cast Sinead O'Connor as the Virgin Mary in *The Butcher Boy* in 1997.[15]) Within the framework of such rigid social and religious mores, pregnancy can be seen as a laical imitation of the Incarnation. It is clear that the very description of the pregnant Virgin Mary as a recurring nightmare in *Hush-a-Bye Baby* is, because of its haunting grotesqueness, a sarcastic parody of the social and religious inculcation of the Incarnation. Margo Harkin's casting of Sinead O'Connor as a devoted follower of the Holy Mother, daring blasphemy Sinead committed on "Saturday Night Live", and Neil Jordan's deliberate casting of the famous hell-raiser as the Virgin Mary, and Helen Gallivan's attempt to redress the image of Our Lady remind us of a close connection between fact and film, reality and fiction in their indictment of the women's condition in Ireland. The experience of Goretti and Sinead in *Hush-a-Bye Baby* should not be regarded as personal.

In highly child-oriented societies, women find themselves forced to wrestle with the bad image that abortion may have on their family and friends. The manner in which Goretti gets along with her family is distorted by the influence of the social taboo on abortion, in which the sanctity of conception is held above the rights of women. Society condemns any pregnancy outside the sanction of marriage. The film portrays how the high pressure the traditional Catholic community exerts upon Goretti drives her into despair. It is a striking parallel that, just as Goretti's boyfriend Ciaran feels strong antipathy towards the British Army on the streets, so Goretti exerts her emotional resistance to the ideologies of Catholic Ireland. Catholic women in Co. Derry, in nationalistic terms, not only belong to the minority culture under threat from the British Army, but at the same time are suppressed as a subordinate within the minority, compelled to follow the social, religious and political mores within Co. Derry's Catholic nationalist community. A woman like Goretti, therefore may suffer from a double oppression.

Margo Harkin's film *Hush-a-Bye Baby* is unique in juxtaposing both the issue of an unwanted pregnancy and abortion and also a man's failure to share the female experience. Men gravitate towards power politics as a sexual

sublimation and miss the unity of both sexes. Goretti's boyfriend, Ciaran, who is the father of her child, for instance, gets arrested because of his family's radical republican connections, emblematic of the everlasting war with the British government and unionist population. And Goretti's father reads *Derry Journal* bearing the headline: 'Biggest Supergrass Trial Ever Gets Under Way'.

When she visits the prison as a premature mother, Goretti is looking for Ciaran's sympathy and support, but, at the same time, she seems to have a concern for Ciaran in two ways. Firstly, she feels anxiety for his safety in prison. Secondly, she seems to try to create a space where she and Ciaran can safely explore the issue of their unexpected pregnancy and possible abortion on the basis of their mutual trust and love. Here Margo Harkin reveals Goretti's delicate balance of concern for herself and for Ciaran. Goretti's expectation seems to be a feminist one: she didn't abandon him even when he got into deep trouble; now she, facing her own trouble, wants him to stand by her. It is a fair balance but Ciaran breaks Goretti's brave effort with his very self-centered remarks: "Fuck it, Goretti. Am I not in enough shit as it is!" For Ciaran, his conflict within the nationalistic context has priority over the issue of sexuality, pregnancy, and abortion. Through his severe remarks, Ciaran actually marginalizes Goretti's struggle as a matter of no importance. For Ciaran, her pregnancy is unexpected simply because it is outside of *his* plan. He judges the value of her pregnancy exclusively through his patriarchal viewpoint.

The choice of the name for the girl, Goretti, in this film is significant, for it evokes a strong association with Saint Mary Goretti, a canonized teenager girl who was nearly raped and, immediately after the attempted rape, she was stabbed to death. The implication seems to be that the pregnancy caused by a man who will not share the female experience is hardly distinguishable from a rape or an agonizing death. As far as substantial sympathies for women in crisis in hyper-nationalistic areas are concerned, as Brian McIlroy put it, "a lamentable absence exists".[16] It is possible to take this prison scene as an emblem of a troubled relationship between a feminist perspective and radical republicanism in a Catholic nationalist area. Thus Goretti's makeshift attempts at abortion mark a breaking point in the growing disharmony between both sexes.

When Goretti overhears a vitriolic discussion about abortion on the radio, she is making a simple pancake with flour and eggs at a kitchen table in a small cottage in Donegal. The director focuses our attention upon Goretti's pale countenance and her hands in slow motion, picturing her cracking eggs into a bowl of flour. This sequence is very rich and suggestive in that the sequence serves as indictment of the women's condition of those days. As I have mentioned earlier, rock music "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" is repeatedly used in *Hush-a-Bye Baby.* This hilarious piece of music was a main feature of a music video Cyndi Lauper released in 1984, and made an instantaneous great hit of the year. Cyndi Lauper played a role of a jovial girl in the music video, who sallies forth out of her house, flamboyantly dancing with a group of her girl friends, and leaves behind her wonderstruck mother who is breaking eggs into a bowl of flour and making pan cake for her family. Thus the pancake sequence in *Hush-a-Bye Baby* is a grotesque parody of a traditional image of a full-time mother, which can be Goretti's self-image in the near future. This sequence also carries the clear connotation of a fertilized egg, which can be deliberately broken by its mother, reflecting the anti-abortion accusation of the Bishop of Clonfert, Joseph Cassidy, that "the most dangerous place for an infant to be is in the mother's womb". Thus the pancake sequence produced the tactful visualization of Goretti's vague fear that she might have to make an unwished home and her hidden desire that she would like to cancel her pregnancy, both of which had not risen to the surface of her full consciousness yet.

Goretti, tormented by these indescribable feelings of growing fear and hidden desire, sits alone on a beach in Donegal. In this seashore scene, Goretti squats down upon white boulders and gazes blank at a blue plastic bag and a net washed up on the shore. The camera slowly zooms in on her figure with dreary rattling sounds as if she were sitting upon piles of white skulls of small babies. This grim and uncanny scene makes a parallel with infanticides or child murders in 1980s here and there in Ireland, especially with the murder of the baby of the Kerry Babies who had been found washed up on a beach in a plastic bag in 1984. The plastic bag is a symbol of infanticide and, as Elizabeth Cullingford pointed out, a particular reference to the fertilizer bag in which the baby

of the Kerry Babies case was found.[17] The repeated shot of a net can be regarded as a symbol which comprehensively represents numerous folk tales of babies being caught by fishermen. The skillful arrangement of these two symbols was probably inspired by Seamus Heaney's 'Limbo' in which a woman drown her illegitimate baby in a Donegal fishing village and the body of the baby is caught by a local fisherman. What Margo Harkin underscores here is the actual and textual continuum of infanticide in Irish culture, and she eliminates the possibility that this film might be considered to be an isolated example of the issue.

In Heaney's 'Limbo', a local fisherman at Ballyshannon in Donegal catches a baby as well as salmon in a net. The baby is called, in language charged with the rhetoric of fishery, "an illegitimate spawning" and "a small one thrown back to the waters". The idea of the natural world, where all living things, in a sense, carry out *carpe diem* without restriction, is grievously disturbed by the unwanted intervention of the baby who is trifled with by discrimination between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" in human society. The fishermen's convention that a small fry, when caught by mistake, should be thrown back to the waters heightens the cruelty of the infanticide. The convention is meant to foster fertile reproduction in the future whereas here the rhetoric is applied to a baby who is drowned and abandoned in the sea. In a community where the idea of sexual reproduction and prosperity is based on the traditional church's teaching and its idea of divine providence, children are deprived of the opportunity to observe and judge the social and religious code. They, along with unbaptized infants, cannot help but be marginalized into Limbo. So in Heaney's 'Limbo', such children are described as existing in a "far briny zone" where there is little certainty that the palms of the fisher of men, Christ, can make a redemptive catch of the baby. At first sight, Heaney seems to reiterate a traditional representation of limbo as a place at the fringe of Hell beyond redemption. He seems to reinforce the idea of infanticide or abortion as a sordid murder because it robs the innocent victim of its eternal happiness. However, the poet shows his deep sympathy with the woman in crisis and rejects the traditional representation of an infanticide as a cold-blooded killer:

> A small one thrown back
> To the waters. But I'm sure
> As she stood in the shallows
> Ducking him tenderly
>
> Till the frozen knobs of her wrists
> Were dead as the gravel,
> He was a minnow with hooks
> Tearing her open.

The male poet sees into the existence of a desperate woman behind the ghastly child murder. His description conveys the ultimate pathos of the mother who feels keenly her and her baby's contravention of religious code. Being born and bred within the social and religious mores of Catholicism, she has no choice but to assume the role of pseudo-priest when she drowns her baby and, by doing so, celebrates it as a desperate shift in ritual. When she drowns her baby in the sea, whose waters can be read as the scientist's hypothetical origin of all living things, namely, the womb for all animate beings, her body is torn open from within by her baby. Heaney regards the throes of her body and her mental anguish, as her second birth pangs.

Heaney's sympathetic imagination can be compared with the deep sympathy and compassion for the female experience which Aidan Mathews displays in *Communion*, where a mother, being present at her son's deathbed, regards his unbearable pains from the brain tumor as her second painful delivery, saying, "this is between the two of us, just like his birth".[18] What is striking here is not only the sympathetic description of mothers, who regard the death of their children as their own second labor pains, but also the way Heaney as well as Aidan Mathews grasps the female experience through their imagination for birth pangs as if they were following a primitive custom of couvades, in which a father performs acts of a mother, being almost physically and psychologically

affected by the labor pains of his wife. Heaney vicariously imagines an infanticide tragedy and shares the experience of a woman in crisis, most visible when Heaney describes how the mother "tenderly" drowns her baby. The adverb is probably the exact antithesis of all the qualifiers which have ever been attached to infanticide. The male poet seems to grasp the female psychic state through the common experience of pain.

As for the story that a fisherman catches a baby in a net in 'Limbo', there are numerous Irish folk legends in which fishermen net babies.[19] For instance, there was the surprised fisherman in Donegal who netted a newborn, brought the newborn to his village, and, even after the community accepted the baby, it was rejected by a local priest, and it was brought back to the sea.[20] Heaney seems to have seen through the reality hidden behind those legends and folktales. Through his imagination of a woman in crisis in 'Limbo', he constitutes the link that will join the past, in which anonymous tales and legends of infanticide were innumerably produced, to the present, where not a few women suffer from their unwanted pregnancy and are obsessed with the idea of infanticide. When Heaney based his poem upon the products of religious mores, such as the image of baptism by a priest and the idea of Limbo, he seems not to have freed himself from the paradigm the religious mores have conditioned. But Heaney, attaching the breathtaking modifier "tenderly" to the behaviour of the desperate mother, revised the essentialism which had marginalized women like Goretti. In effect, he contradicts the woman on the radio programme when she names the deliberate cancel of maternity as a cold-blooded murder. What Heaney challenges are first the discourses that have produced and diffused such essentialism and second the religious culture that has penetrated to the core of Irish society. It is Heaney's aggressive stance on the detention of Irish women in this essentialism and religious mores that Margo Harkin much appreciated.

The female director appreciated Heaney's attempt to share the female experience so much that a female teacher, in a sequence of classwork in *Hush-a-Bye Baby*, chooses Heaney's 'Limbo' for a classroom study that leads fifteen-year-old girls into discussion. The premature mother, Goretti, remarks that the mother "didn't kill her baby, Miss. She must be desperate. He imagines her ducking him [her child] tenderly. She was very unhappy" with tears in her eyes. The mother in Heaney's poem awakens deep sympathy in Goretti because Goretti feels that her agony is embodied in the poem. When Goretti comments on the mother — "She must be desperate" — she is pouring out her own heart. The mother in the poem is Goretti herself.

At the end of the film, the inexorable pressures of the wretched conditions finally overpower her utterly with extreme panic, in a state of which she awakens from a nightmare of the pregnant Virgin Mary. The film ends with Goretti being hysterical. She loses use of her tongue except for her hysterical screams. Goretti, as a final resort, has no choice to fall into silence and hysterics, which is a desperate revolt against a "rationally" established patriarchal order. Nothing in her community exists to meet the needs of the young girl in crisis simply because, as Hélène Cixous explains about hysteria, "it's the body that talks and man doesn't hear the body".[21]

Margo Harkin leaves the film open-ended and, by so doing, she underscores that Goretti's sufferings are still a current issue for women today. But it does not mean that the director fails to find any hope for the issue. Margo Harkin revealed her motive in the class work sequence of the film saying, "it was very much my desire to get that poem ['Limbo'] in".[22] The Irish woman director acknowledged that Heaney successfully shared the female experience. Whether a male's pen can describe the female experience may still be an open question. But the intertextuality between the film and Heaney's 'Limbo', upon which Margo Harkin constructed the richly suggestive seashore sequence and the distressing classroom sequence, is the most positive and persuasive answer given by a woman to the delicate question of whether a man can experience vicariously what a woman in crisis has to go through, which will also endorse W.B Yeats's attempt in *Purgatory*, as we shall see later.

W.B. Yeats's *Purgatory*

Yeats's *Purgatory*, which was first performed at the Abbey Theatre in 1938, depicts how keenly a mother repents of her unhappy marriage and pregnancy and how endlessly after her death she dreams back to the night of the consummation through her son's eyes. In the play he is Old Man, and he kills his son in order to break the vicious

circle of her endless remorse and to finish "all that consequence"(CP, p.435).[23] *Purgatory* looms very large in the current canon of Anglo-Irish literature in that the play has been a key facet, on a feminist level, of national life, wherein the issue of maternity meets the issue of child murder in cultural, religious, and social mores in Ireland.

Yeats explained the "Dreaming Back" in *Purgatory*, saying that "the dead suffer remorse and re-create their old lives".[24] Yeats admitted that he owed much to mediaeval Japanese plays for this idea of re-creation of the dead's old lives.

Most scholars believe that one of those mediaeval Japanese plays is *MOTOMEZUKA*, in which the dead re-create their unrecompensed love. The soul of a woman cannot be released from remorse even by a Buddhist monk's prayer but only after her soul displays her eternal suffering. Then her soul goes back to the world of the dead. *MOTOMEZUKA* also provided inspiration to Yeats for *The Dreaming of the Bones*, in which a "Stranger", Dermot MacMurrough in disguise, and a "Young Girl", Dervorgilla in disguise, come back to this world. They plead with a young man for forgiveness and ask him to release them from their remorse but in vain.

The difference as well as similarity among those three plays should be delineated. *MOTOMEZUKA* and Yeats's *The Dreaming of the Bones* are similar to each other in that, in *MOTOMEZUKA*, the purification of the dead's remorse is not completed by the monk's prayer as, *in The Dreaming of the Bones*, such absolution is denied by a young man who is asked for it. They are also similar because in both the dead revisit this world, communicate with the living, and recognize their own dreaming back. The dead mother in *Purgatory*, in contrast to the characters in these plays, cannot communicate with the living. "Deaf! Both deaf! If I should throw/ A stick or a stone they would not hear" (CP, p.434). Nor can she recognize her own dreaming back itself.

Through his career as playwright, Yeats had been so fascinated with the idea of ghosts that he dealt with it repeatedly in his plays. But *Purgatory* constitutes the only exception, in that the ghost cannot communicate with the living. The mother's re-creation of her old life in *Purgatory* can not be affected by the miserable distress of her son after her death, "Twice a murderer and all for nothing"(CP, p.436). All she can do is to repeat her old life, "there can be nothing new"(AV, p.226), what moved her soul most, namely, marriage, maternity and pregnancy. Just as Margo Harkin, leaving her *Hush-a-Bye Baby* open-ended, underscores the endlessness and the currentness of Goretti's sufferings, so Yeats emphasizes the endless imprisonment of the woman in the paradigm of a patriarchal society, where the cooperative interaction between both sexes is almost impossible.

Yeats remarked that the spirit of the mother in *Purgatory* "suffers because of its share, when alive, in the destruction of an honoured house"[25]. It does not necessarily mean that Yeats assumes that the mother in the play should meet the need that the social and religious mores of her society imposes upon her, but he underlines that the mother keenly feels her contravention of those codes, just as the mother in Heaney's 'Limbo'. One may notice that the dead's remorse in *Purgatory* is turned not to her gestation period, when she might have had enough time to foresee the house's destruction, nor to the childbirth, whose labour cost her life and compelled her to leave her only child in the hands of her dissipated husband. Rather her remorse turns to her bridal night when she gets pregnant. When the protagonist, Old Man, remarks, "She [his mother] died in giving birth to me"(CP, p.431), he reveals that his mother had experienced a high-risk pregnancy and was too frail for childbearing, just as Ann Lovett, as we have seen before, died in childbirth in 1984. The mother's fateful day is the day when she gets pregnant. After that she has no option to take or leave it in the society that is thoroughly intolerant of women's right to choose. After that day, the inviolability of pregnancy and the untouchability of impregnation come into effect and turn into a source of her eternal remorse as if it were an irredeemable sin in her soul.

In the narrative structure of the play, which gradually reveals how the contravention of social and religious codes torture the mother, the significance of women's status inside the order of the Big House is underscored, as Margot Backus points out.[26] This is explicit when the mother is treated coldly by her own mother. After the mother gets married with a stableman, her own mother, as a bitter remonstrance, breaks off all oral communications with her, and, by so doing, makes her daughter voiceless. What drives the grandmother to punish her daughter is an idea of the perfect woman, an ideal which the class-conscious society of Ascendancy has produced and imposed upon women, who are supposed to properly maintain the society. The mother seems to

exercise her free will when she rejects the contrived image of a woman and chooses her bridegroom outside of the society.

The place were she lives, however, is never a free world. Just as Goretti, in *Hush-a-Bye Baby* who could not find her free world in both sides of the border, a fact of which she is cynically reminded by the mural, "You are now entering Free Derry", so the mother in *Purgatory* can never find her free world. She is totally surrounded by a cultural force, which has turned out the "old sharp-eyes-and-the-family rosary" (B, p.18) mother-in-law and those "lean and lanky" (B, p.18) neighbours in *Bailegangaire* who punish Dolly for her transgression of the social and religious code. In *Hush-a-Bye Baby* the same culture has created the statue of the pregnant Virgin Mary, who is intolerant of Gorreti's hidden desire to abort and tortures her in nightmares. The culture has generated the social and religious mores in 'Limbo' that propel the mother in the poem to commit infanticide. In such a world, the mother, who regards her pregnancy as a source of an endless remorse, and Old Man, who kills his son without the baptismal rite and so drives him into Limbo, are not supposed to find a spiritual salvation.

A woman in crisis in a world where there is, for her, no freedom directs the works we have considered. Yeats's *Purgatory* records an acute dilemma of an unwanted maternity in 1930s in Ireland, which is to await Heaney in 1970s and Tom Murphy and Margo Harkin in 1980s. *Purgatory* was first performed on the 10th of August in 1938, only one year after the Constitution of Ireland was enacted by the people on the first of July 1937, in which Catholic doctrine was closely reflected.[27] The theoretical identity of the new state, Eire, established as a basis for the country the maintenance of home as a stronghold of religious morality and heightened women's passivity in their maternity. It was in the national referendum on the 24th of November in 1995 that Irish women had been partly relieved of such restriction through the adaptation of The Family Law, which W.B.Yeats had foreseen in his defense of divorce as early as in 1925.[28] *Purgatory* takes on a new significance when it is seen in the context of agelong manipulation of maternity by church and state, whose major landmarks are the catholicization in modern Ireland in 1937, the abortion referendum in 1983, the bitter arguments on the "X-case" in 1992, and another abortion referendum to revise the X-case in 2002. It is women in crisis in this context that W.B Yeats, Heaney, and Tom Murphy have depicted in the works we have examined so far.

The repressed sexuality of women in crisis may find its self-expression for all its difficulty. It is reasonable to assume that the mother in *Purgatory*, in the midst of her remorse, has her pleasure too. Declan Kiberd explained how Hester Prynne and Dimmesdale in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* daily repeat the thrill of their sin in their minds, adopting D.H.Lawrence's idea that the sin is the self-watching, the self-consciousness.[29] A sin originates not in the physical act of commission but in recognizing the sin. We can apply this theory to answer the question made by Old Man in *Purgatory*, "If pleasure and remorse must both be there, / Which is the greater?"(CP, p.434). In this case, pleasure and remorse do not offset but multiply each other. According to Yeats's theory of the progress of the soul from death to rebirth, a soul is "compelled to live over and over again the events that had most moved it"(AV, p.226). Yeats put it well because, above all her experiences in the life of the woman in *Purgatory*, marriage and maternity "had most moved" her soul with its endless remorse and endless pleasure, and, that being so, her soul "is compelled to live over and over again the events." The consummation of marriage moved her most and her soul is constantly dreaming back the action of conceiving in the womb, which her only child, Old Man, desperately tries to abort.

Yeats underscores how doggedly Old Man struggles to resolve the enigma of her mother's sexuality and how compassionately he struggles to share the female experience. In *Purgatory*, it is an old male who vicariously commits a child murder. It should be noted that, although "there can be nothing new" after her death, Old Man assumes that his mother can recognized the sequel of her marriage and death, the whole story of the destruction of the honoured house: "She never knew the worst...But now she knows it all, being dead" (CP, p.431). Yeats remarked that the soul of the mother "suffers because of its share, when alive," in the total disruption of her house, while Old Man thinks her soul perceives whole the tragic history of the house. What should be her presentiment, while she was alive, of the destruction is extended, in the mind of Old Man, to her posthumous recognition of a posthumously accomplished fact. But Old Man, not the mother, is the only person who can grasp

the aftermath of her marriage and death, the whole story of the Big House destroyed. We can find here that Old Man not only turns his thoughts towards her mother's experience and vicariously feels her remorse but also projects his own feelings of guilt upon his mother's remorse. He, as an offspring of his dissolute father, consumes himself with the self-attributed innate depravity and evil tendency of his nature. This self-ascribed original sin drives him into self-degradation ("I became a pedlar on the roads, / No good trade, but good enough / Because I am my father's son"(CP, p.433) and leads him into desperate attempts to share and appease his mother's remorse, which may, in turn, expiate his own guilty feeling and finally appease his own remorse. Yeats knows how a sense of sin can express itself in intricate ways. Thus Old Man's vicarious remorse enables him to experience vividly for himself what his mother has gone through and to relive her remorse. When Old Man remarks that "she is alone in her remorse"(CP, p.435), he is entirely wrong because he as well as his mother suffers from her remorse.

As for the share of other's experience, Yeats put a suggestive episode into the play. We should not overlook that it is after, not before, Boy attempts stealing his father's money that he could see his grandfather and cries out, "A dead, living, murdered man!" (CP, p.435). Just before this sequence, Yeats refers to a festival held in Killorglin, Co. Kerry seen through the eyes of Boy, "that is my age, sixteen years old, at the Puck Fair" (CP, p.432). All the festivals have a connotation of revolution or rebellion because a festival brings something highly unusual into our daily life. The Puck Fair is more unusual in that a wild goat, a symbol of amorousness and productiveness, usurps the throne, takes a young innocent girl to be his queen, and demotes noble human beings from rulers to subjects. It is in this festive and topsy-turvy atmosphere that Boy steals money from his father, just as his grandfather steals the property of the Big House. By so doing, Boy shares his grandfather's experience. The explicit implication is that we cannot see others until we share others' experience. Old Man can see his dead father probably because he feels acutely conscious of his status of the offspring of his prodigal father and feelings of guilt toward the corruption of the Big House. He can also see his dead mother simply because he experiences for himself what his mother has gone through.

Purgatory, a story of the dead parents' experience told through the eyes of Old Man and, partly, Boy, is, in this sense, a dramatization of reliving other's experience. Old Man relives the deep remorse of his mother and, in the midst of vicarious remorse, kills his son. When Old Man sings a cradle song and he stabs his son to death, the Old Man's troubled mind regards Boy not as an almost sixteen-year-old boy but as an infant. The lullaby reflects the mind of Old Man, who is so obsessed with his mother's sufferings from her unhappy marriage, and so possessed with hatred for the night of consummation of her marriage that he finds in Boy the embodiment of the idea of an unwanted baby. Thus the homicide by Old Man, who has ever killed his father, namely, committed a proxy murder of the dissipated husband for his mother, can be read as a proxy child murder for his mother when he stabbed a knife deeply into Boy again and again (which reminds us of the Kerry Babies case), singing a lullaby to him (as if he were a forerunner of the mother in Heaney's 'Limbo'), "Hush-a-bye baby, thy father's a knight" (CP, p.435). Old Man imagines himself into his mother's condition, gets right into it, and identifies himself with his mother. When he killed his son, he is assuming the persona of his mother like a mask, and he is acting his mother.

The play is not the first occasion for Yeats to deal with the subject of sharing other's experience. As Declan Kiberd has shown, Yeats in his earlier period detected a flaw in the accepted idea of courtly love, which can ignore, not recognize, female experience simply by "placing a woman on a pedestal"[30], and that the poet, in his middle and later period, had "the desire to share the experience of a woman"[31]. If men indulge themselves exclusively in the beautification of women, if they do not share female experience, they can not see her, which makes an important axiom especially in Yeats's later periods. Yeats's manifestation of his desire to share the female experience, which Declan Kiberd detects in 'Crazy Jane' lyrics and 'A Woman Young and Old' poems, can be found in *Purgatory*. Although a male poet cannot be the woman, he grasps the critical moment of her life, sympathises with her in her dilemma of the regrettable pregnancy, which brings her an eternal remorse, and attains his seemingly unrealizable desire to be a woman. It is true that Yeats did not adopt a female voice as a protagonist in *Purgatory*, as he did in his 'Crazy Jane' lyrics and 'A Woman Young and Old' poems. But it is not that he had no craving to share female experience. Rather, he was, as Heaney in 'Limbo', more interested in the

representation of the male response to female experience.

Conclusion

In the Anglo-Irish literature in the 20th century, we often find the grim connection of maternity and infanticide described by male poets and playwrights. Among them, Yeats's *Purgatory* looms very large in the current canon of Anglo-Irish literature as an expression of his ardent desire to share the female experience. Yeats's enthusiasm is still transferring to contemporary literature, such as Heaney's 'Limbo' and Murphy's *Bailegangaire* like a hub of a wheel transferring its energy to radiating spokes. These men could not become real women. That being so, they vicariously imagined the experience of women, which lead them to challenge social, religious, cultural mores that worked as repressive powers upon women. What allows Yeats's *Purgatory* to form an apt parallel of our contemporary play and poem is the painful fact that Irish women are still suffering the same plight. But, as we have seen, the textual and cultural critique by women artists of the theme of maternity and infanticide has been, and will be, accompanied well by daring and honest attempts to share the female experience by Irish men of letters.

Notes

1 *Irish Daily Mirror*, 15 July 2002.
2 *Irish Times*, 8 February 2003.
3 Tom Murphy, *Bailegangaire*, London: Methuen, 2001. Abbreviated as B in this paper. The first version of *Bailegangaire* (1997) is abbreviated as B1.
4 In the original version of the play, published in 1986 by The Gallery Press, and the revised version, published in 1993 as *Tom Murphy Plays :2* by Methuen Drama, Dolly is six or seven months pregnant while in the latest version, published in 2001 by Methuen Publishing Limited, she is five or six months pregnant, which is more plausible when Dolly says, "Trying to conceal it."
5 A public interview at the Abbey Theatre on the 7th of October in 2001.
6 Nicholas Grene, *The Politics of Irish Drama: plays in context from Boucicault to Friel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.219.
7 Grene, p.219.
8 Brian Girvin, "Social Change and Moral Politics: the Irish Constitutional Referendum 1983", *Political Studies* (1986), XXXIV, 65.
9 Paula Meehan, *The Man Who Was Marked By Winter*, Oldcastle: Gallery Books, 1991, pp.40-42.
10 For the details of the case, see Nell McCafferty, *A Woman to Blame: The Kerry Babies Case*, Dublin: Attic Press, 1985.
11 Fintan O'Toole, *Tom Murphy: The Politics of Magic*, Dublin: New Island Books, 1994, p.232.
12 Roche, p.284.
13 Roche, p.161.
14 Helen Gallivan, *The Temple Within: The Rosary, the Bible and the Inner Journey*, Dublin: The Columba Press, 2001, p.91.
15 Fidelma Farley, "Interrogating Myths of Maternity in Irish Cinema: Margo Harkin's *Hush-a-Bye Baby*", Irish University Review, Autumn/Winter 1999, p.219.
16 Brian McIlroy, *Shooting to Kill: filmmaking and the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland*, Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1998, p. 108.
17 Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, "Seamus and Sinéad: From "Limbo" to Saturday Night Live by way of Hush-a-Bye Baby", Colby Quarterly, Volume XXX, Number 1, March 1944, p.48.
18 Aidan Mathews, *Communion*, London: Nick Hern Book, 2002, p.64.
19 Unpublished lecture by Angela Bourke.
20 See *Storyteller in Donegal*, a documentary programme broadcasted by RTE1 on the 31st of March 2002.
21 Hélène Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?" translated by Annette Kuhn, *Signs* 7 (1981), 49.
22 Telephone interview by Elizabeth Butler Cullingford with Margo Harkin. See "Seamus and Sinéad: From "Limbo" to Saturday Night Live by way of Hush-a-Bye Baby", p.45.
23 In referring to W.B.Yeats's works, I have adopted a system of parenthetic abbreviations in the course of my text. Key to the abbreviations are expressed as follows:

AV: *A Vision*, New York: Macmillan, 1937.
CP: *The Collected Plays of W.B.Yeats: New Edition with Five Additional Plays*, London: Macmillan, 1953.
VP: *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B.Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach. London: Macmillan, 1957.
UP: *Uncollected Prose*, vol. I , ed. John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson. London: Macmillan, 1975.
EI: *Essays* and Introductions, London: Macmillan, 1961.
Ex: *Explorations*, New York: Collier Books, 1973.

24 Donald T. Torchiana, *Yeats and Georgian Ireland*, Evanston, 1966, pp.357-8.
25 Torchiana, pp.357-8.
26 Margot Backus, *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice, and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1999, p.177.
27 Girvin, p.63; J.H. Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland 1923-1979*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, second edition, 1980, pp.378-9.
28 W.B.Yeats, 'Divorce: An Undelivered Speech' (March 1925) in *The Senate Speeches of W.B.Yeats*, ed. Donald R. Pearce, London: Faber, 1961, p.157.
29 Declan Kiberd, *Men and Feminism in Modern Literature*, London: Macmillan, 1985, p.22.
30 Kiberd, p.105.
31 Kiberd, p127.